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NEW THEATRE MAGAZINE

VOLUME II, NUMBER 4. 2/- JULY, 1961
(IN U.K.)

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NEW THEATRE MAGAZINE

Volume II, Number 4 July 1961

The Quarterly Magazine of Repertory and University Drama

Editor:
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Business Manager:
ALLAN SHARPLES

Assistant Editor:
MARY GOWAN MORGAN

Art Editor:
CHRISTINE DENMEAD

Circulation:
WENDY ANDREWS

Sales:
JULIA BRYSON

Advertising:
MICHAEL HURSEY

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" Murder in the Cathedral "—Bristol University Drama Dept.

Model of the Cannon Hill Arts Centre.

The Arts Club, Cannon Hill.

Voices in the Wilderness

THE EDITOR

WITH the appearance of this number, *New Theatre Magazine* reaches the end of its second year of publication. Our original manifesto defined the policy of the journal as being, amongst other things, " to give notice to new theatrical ventures, particularly Civic enterprises, in the provinces " and, looking back over the articles published to-date, it is fair to say that no matter what changes of emphasis there may have been in other fields this aim has been faithfully adhered to during the past two years. The New Nottingham Playhouse, the Cheltenham " Everyman", " The Belgrade " at Coventry, the Lincoln touring scheme, Leicester, Newcastle, Chichester—imaginative undertakings, all of which have been covered in these pages.

This looks wonderful ! Why then are we continually being told that drama in the provinces is dying ? Why should we be concerned at the closing of so many theatres when these fine, new buildings are being constructed to replace them ? Why all this demand for State financial aid for the theatre, and why all this talk of sixpence on the rates, when public enterprise and private responsibility are doing so well ? Add to the ventures just mentioned the number of Repertory theatres still at work in the provinces, and everything in the theatrical garden looks lovely !

Theatrical *garden ?* Then why "Voices in the *Wilderness*"*?* Because new buildings and prophecies of new buildings are not keeping pace with closures; because many of the existing repertory theatres are threatened with closure through debt; because huge areas of dense population have no theatre.

It is true that the theatres in these towns do represent a move towards the decentralisation of the theatre, a move which is essential to the provinces if they are to be allowed to play their rightful part in the development of drama in this country. It is also true that the idea of Civic-owned theatres is slowly gaining ground. In the cases where the local Councils are not actually sponsoring the building of playhouses in their towns, they are at least actively supporting the enterprises with the gift of sites, donations and subsidies.

Perhaps the time is now approaching, therefore, when we could—and should—take a bolder step forward in the development of these provincial centres of theatrical activity, when we should not be content even with a civic-owned or civic-supported theatre. The next move should be towards the establishment of an overall Civic policy towards the theatre in all its forms, whereby a City Council, guided preferably by one man specifically appointed for the purpose, can ensure that the people it serves have available to them drama, ballet, opera, experimental theatre and "pure entertainment" of the highest standard.

There seems no reason why the provinces should receive these pleasures second-hand from London—often in a somewhat shabby condition—when they could have their own. It is time that the provinces made some contributions in these fields, by creating and supporting their own theatre, ballet and opera companies, by not being afraid to experiment with *avant-garde* drama, and thus prove that the best is not necessarily confined to London. The Welsh National Opera Company serves as a torch bearer already.

Our friends in Coventry, Leicester, Chichester and so on have made a good and welcome start in the right direction. If they can carry their pioneering faith and enterprise still further, then perhaps we can make a garden out of the wilderness after all.

Special Announcement

PLAYWRIGHTS' CONFERENCE

IN March last a short conference was held in Bristol to discuss the future of the Fellowship in Playwriting in the Drama Department of the University, which has hitherto been financed from funds made available by the Rockefeller Foundation. Thanks to the generosity of T W W, this Fellowship has now been endowed in perpetuity as a memorial to the late Lord Cilcennin, first Chairman of T W W.

The conference was organised in the light of this new development, and Miss Ann Jellicoe, Mr. John Arden, Dr. Alex Comfort, Mr. Peter Alexander, Mr. Richard Findlater and Mr. John Whiting were invited to assist the Department in making recommendations concerning conditions of appointment, tenure, etc. T W W was represented at the conference by Mr. Michael Frostick, the Bristol Old Vic Company by Mr. Nat Brenner, the Bristol Old Vic School by Mr. Duncan Ross and the West Region of the B B C by Mr. Desmond Hawkins and Mr. Donald Wilson.

The discussions were held in private, but a report of the proceedings and recommendations has been made and will be printed as a supplement to the October issue of *New Theatre Magazine*. A copy of this supplement will be sent free of charge to all present subscribers who renew their subscriptions before the end of this year, and also to all new subscribers. Additional copies will be available on application, price 2/6d. each.

L.A.M.D.A.

In this article MICHAEL MACOWAN Principal of the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, outlines the work of his school, and MICHAEL WARRE (photograph opposite), a member of the staff, describes the new studio theatre.

THE SCHOOL . . . .

OUR work in training actors and actresses for the professional theatre at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art depends on the fact that we are a small institution. The maximum number of students in the Academy is never more than seventy, and of these twelve are

older and more experienced students from abroad, doing a one year's course in the classics, before returning to their own country. This means that the Principal and the key members of the staff work with every student, and that one attitude sets the atmosphere which pervades all the work, though it can be expressed in different ways from the various people teaching.

A possible brief way of giving some idea of the work, is to sketch the programme being undertaken at Dartington Hall, Devonshire, at the end of the term, by the students at the end of their present second year, who are going to remain until the spring of the third year. They will give five performances in the Barn Theatre at Dartington of André Obey's play *Lucrece*. Incidentally, this is a happy choice for us, because it was one of the plays that Obey wrote for Michel St. Denis and the Compagnie de Quinze; and a good deal of our work stems from the tradition that St. Denis established at the Old Vic Theatre School just after the war. As *Lucrece* is a short piece, the evening will end with a short revue. In this there will be a good deal of emphasis on jazz dancing, which is now proving a most useful part of the training. Besides numbers from recent intimate revues like *Cranks* and *Share My Lettuce*, there will be things developed from certain aspects of the training: for instance, dramatic movement in masks, and an arrangement of Vachel Lindsay's *Daniel Jazz*, which uses choral speaking and percussion, as well as singing.

On the Sunday evening, in the beautiful 14th century Great Hall at Dartington, the same students will play sequences of scenes from *Macbeth*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Anthony and Cleopatra*, and *Twelfth Night*. In these we are having the invaluable help of Dr. Bertram Joseph of Bristol University, whose thinking about the handling of Shakespeare's text coincides with our own view, that one of the corner stones of good acting is to mean what you say—*exactly* what you say. It seems obvious, but it is very often not practised in playing Shakespeare.

The point of outlining this rather heavy and varied programme of work is that it illustrates our belief that all sides of an actor, and of a human being, should be developed, if he is eventually going to grow into a mature artist, or for that matter, a mature human being. It is partly for this reason that singing and dancing now play a part all through the training. Whilst we and the students are very serious indeed about the theatre, we do not despise what is often considered its lighter aspects, particularly because these aspects make such big technical demands. Music is at the same time a powerful emotional stimulant and an exact discipline. It is the combination of these that produces art.

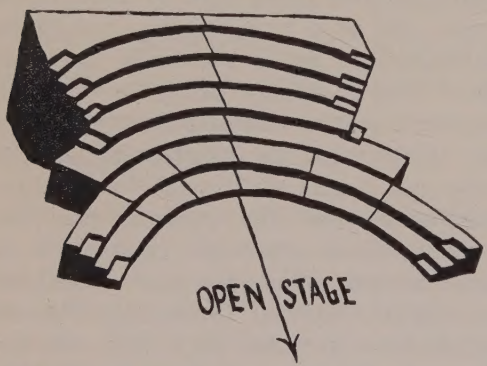
Such a programme of work would not be possible if the ground had not been very carefully prepared. It can only be undertaken at this stage: the end of the second year. The first year has to be devoted largely to finding freedom and truth.

It is because freedom needs space and versatility—in their widest sense—that we are undertaking the project for a new theatre, which Michael Warre describes below. He has not pointed out that this extraordinarily ingenious scheme, which is being done by the conversion of existing buildings, has been worked out by him and our staff Stage Director, John Terry, though the execution of it will be done with the collaboration of a professional architect, Mr. R. W. Hurst, A.R.I.B.A.

MICHAEL MACOWAN.

. . . . AND THE STUDIO.

It is difficult to describe a project of this nature without going back to first base, questioning the motives and searching for the problems involved. Why do we want a new theatre at L.A.M.D.A. ? Certainly not for the usual reason that we need more seats. What we want is more flexibility, more elbow room and breathing space, in fact more freedom.



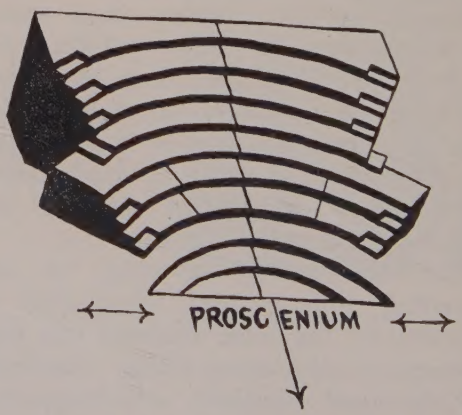
We want freedom to choose whatever form of working area we need—not from month to month, week to week or even day to day, but as many times as we like from 9.30 a.m. to 10.30 p.m. in the course of one day. The theatre must be capable of easy and quick transformation between classes, and then be ready for performance at night.

What is meant by freedom and flexibility ? Freedom from what and for what ? Well, it can hardly have escaped the attention of any serious student of the theatre that for a long time in England we have been " making the best of it " under conditions which would astound the average theatre worker in France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden—conditions which would not even be considered minimal in Germany or Russia. There is no mainstream or life blood of public interest, encouragement (or money) pouring into the theatre in England to-day to compare with the support of the most modest state playhouse anywhere in Europe or Asia. Perhaps this accounts for my embarrassment producing abroad, when asked to explain the workings of the British theatre. " Making the best of it ", is the only possible explanation of the attitude of the present government to the theatre—let us hope that it will not last (I mean the attitude of course !).

What can we do to bring freedom to our students ? Freedom of expression in theatrical terms. We do not want to go on making the best of a bad job; we want to do the best job, now.

One of the ways we can cater for the best education of students is by giving them the widest possible range of experience during their training; and how can we best do this but by providing space in which anything can be performed to any shaped audience ?

The idea of the new theatre at L.A.M.D.A. is not so much to reproduce old theatre forms, as to be a laboratory, studio or workshop where students can find how plays were planned in different styles in different epochs, and where they can experiment in forms of production of their own era. As this is intimately tied up



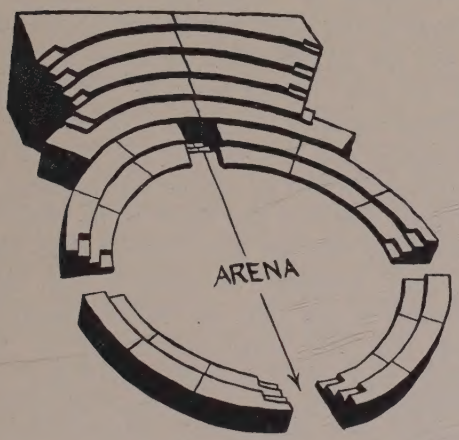
with the position of the player in relation to the public we have tried to find a simple

solution to the changing actor-audience relationship.

What we have evolved can be briefly described thus :

A maximum working stage area of about 50 foot square.

A curved auditorium like a Roman Cavea rising from and looking down on the stage. The seats are divided into two tiers, the higher tier being permanent and seating approximately 100.



The lower tier, which completes the descent to stage level, is in mobile sections on wheels, each unit seating about 12. Four units are enough to continue the width of the upper tier down to stage level; these can be augmented by additional sections to form a semicircle, horseshoe, or complete circle around the stage, giving us an Arena of 34 foot diameter and about 144 seats in addition to the fixed upper tier. As these units run on stage level, when not in use they can be stored backstage and underneath the upper tier.

In front of the lower tier there are sections of floor forming an arc 34 feet wide. This area represents the apron stage, but the sections can be taken up to disclose an orchestra pit. If necessary, this pit can be filled in with two more rows of seats which continue the 'cavea' slightly below stage level, as front stalls in a conventional playhouse.

When a proscenium is required it is treated as part of the scenery of the play, and can be set forward or back, with proscenium doors or without, to any width up to about 50 feet. The side sight lines are generous if the proscenium is not made smaller than 28 feet. A proscenium height of 18 feet would give full view of a 20 foot backcloth from the highest seat in the house.

The grid is 40 feet above the stage, 50 feet wide and 35 feet deep. There are fly floors on each side of the stage, which continue forward into the auditorium for lighting. A paint frame hangs on the back wall of the stage, and the fly floors connect across the painting bridge, which can also be used as a spot bridge for Arena staging. A curtain track runs along the fly rails and paint bridge, completely masking the wings for open stage or Arena performances. The grid, of course, can be used for Arena production to fly in roofs, trees, chandeliers or just a plain ceiling.

To sum up, we hope to give our students laboratory conditions for studying the Art of the Theatre, and perhaps at the same time to contribute to the research, now being carried out, on the most useful form of playhouse for the future.

MICHAEL WARRE

Theatre in the Sixties

ROBERT BOLT

THIS title in itself presupposes a gift of clairvoyance, and if I had this I would be able to know not only about theatre in the sixties, but also whether, at the end of the decade, there will still be any theatres standing, or any other buildings. I am referring, of course, to the possibility of an atomic war. If your heart sinks at this portentous opening, may I say how much I sympathise with you. Let me hasten to reassure you that I am hostile to the view which maintains that the theatre is a branch of sociology or of politics, but I am equally hostile to the view which flies in the face of common sense and seems almost to deny that theatre, or any other art, is a human activity at all.

My reason for dragging in the bomb is that the most important feature of the sixties is that this bomb exists. I am not referring simply to its latent political and social consequences, terrifying though they are. There is a shadow at the back of all our minds, and this shadow is not the bomb or what it might do; it is something that has been there a lot longer than that. It is a question which we dare not ask ourselves, because once asked it must be answered, and we feel that there is no answer and that our case is therefore hopeless. It is the question of our own nature in a godless universe. Until now humanity has simply been unable to destroy itself, for lack of technical means. We have always survived in that margin of safety provided by our own sheer incompetence. That margin no longer exists. We can now do it. This means that we are now brought up slap against the question of our own natures in a way in which, morally speaking, we have always been since our descent from the trees, but which we have so far been able to evade. Now the question of our own hatred of life as opposed to our love of it, of our violence as against our charity, is before us in practical terms. The only thing we have to consider now is what we really want, which is another way of saying what we really are. In other words, the question is no longer one for academic discussion, but is a practical issue facing everyone.

We speak of "avoiding" the bomb, as though it had some volition of its own, but it will not go off unless we make it, and if we do this, it can only be because on balance we want to. I refer, of course, to humanity and not to Britain, Russia or America. Thus if an atomic war happens, it happens because we want it to. This is something that we have always been able to deny hitherto. In wars it has been possible to say that *we* did not want it, *they* did; but now the nature of the catastrophe is so embracing and so absolute that we can no longer adopt that get-out.

Art is the most distinctively human of all activities—it is the activity in which the nature of the human animal is not only demonstrated but also explored. We know that one of the conditions to which the human animal is prone is rage. You can demonstrate rage either by writing one of the speeches from *King Lear* or by hurling a brick through a plate glass window. I would say that the brick is the more effective method, but it does not in any way illuminate or explore the nature of

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The foregoing article, based on a recent talk by Robert Bolt, has been considerably abridged due to lack of space. Mr. Bolt has asked us to point out that (in the original version) his most unreserved praise was accorded to Brecht. Ed.

human rage but merely demonstrates it, and this is why I say that art is a method of exploring the human condition. And that, if you have followed me, is why I dragged the bomb in at all.

This is a singularly fruitless conclusion I have come to—that theatre in the sixties should explore human nature—because it is such an enormous question as to mean anything at all, and if it means anything then it means nothing. The only people with a view of human nature which seems to me to be both reasonably clear and reasonably commodious are the Christians, as most centrally typified by the Catholics. The Christian view of human nature is tragic—not pessimistic, but tragic—because the view is that man is fallen and that as man he can only fail. His condition is not hopeless, however, because there is grace from God. So there you have in its purest form the distinction between tragedy and pessimism. (Pessimism has very little to do with tragedy, and I suspect it is closely allied with comedy). Of the specifically Catholic playwrights, I can only think of Graham Greene. In his two specifically Catholic plays, *The Living Room* and *The Potting Shed,* you have a very diagrammatic demonstration of the Catholic theology, but it does not really work theatrically. I think this is because he is writing for a non-Catholic, and indeed a non-Christian, audience, and therefore you have this element of lecturing. He cannot assume common experience with his audience, and therefore he cannot fall into what Goethe calls the somnambulistic mood necessary for the creation of art. Oddly enough, when Greene said to himself: "Oh all right, then, they won't get the Catholic message —I will write some sheer entertainment", he wrote *The Complaisant Lover*, and because he had thrown out of the window the intention of teaching us about Catholic dogma, he succeeded in doing so. He wrote something that was curiously tragic in its effect, because at the end the situation that had developed on the stage was quite hopeless—the husband and wife needed to stay together, the wife could not go with the lover, yet she could not love the husband, only the lover; and yet there was some kind of reconciliation and contentment for them. When he stopped trying to teach, he taught.

The other great Christian writer for the theatre is, of course, T. S. Eliot. Here too I find all his plays but one theatrical failures—splendid failures, of course, being the man he is. Their interest to me lies almost entirely in their verbal dexterity and in the cultivation of the mind at work. Theatrically, they remain quite arid. I think this is because his view of the theatre is too conscious—he is too aware of trends, of the tradition and of his responsibilities toward the content. Again there is one exception, and this is *Murder in the Cathedral.* There he has adopted a locale which we all know to have been an unquestioningly Christian and Catholic one, so that for a moment we can enjoy the privilege of a convinced and committed society, and the play works largely for that reason.

At the opposite pole you can dissolve the human predicament which I claim we are in by saying that it does not matter. This is most clearly demonstrated by the Buddhist belief which dismisses the whole of experience as illusory. Simply denying that it has importance for you is a way out of the situation, and this explains the current popularity of Zen Buddhism, Tauism and the linguistic philosophers who tend not so much to answer questions as to dismantle them and make you feel a fool for having asked. I think there is an obvious connection between this sort of

nihilistic mysticism and the work of Beckett, Ionesco, Harold Pinter and N. F. Simpson. Their very free-formed art claims as its authority complete spontaneity, coming from the subconscious. Art, of course, does come originally from the subconscious, but the only thing that results if the subconscious is *totally* untrammelled is madness, because in itself it is quite incoherent. Love, rage, hate, destruction, creation, boredom, intense interest, all come out not merely in rapid succession but together. Thus no art can claim to be totally subconscious, for there is an element of control, and the danger is that by denying this and claiming the subconscious as your authority, you have merely escaped responsibility for what in fact you are inevitably doing. I heard Mr. Pinter—a writer for whom I have the very greatest respect—asked on the wireless what the meaning of his plays was, and he said : " Oh, my plays are nonsense ". They asked why, and he replied : " Well, life is nonsense ". This, of course, is something that nobody believes. If you thought that life was nonsense then what would be the point of giving it one shape rather than another ? It would be like trying to carve a statue out of water.

I have postulated that it is not possible for any artist completely to eschew conscious control over what he is doing. It does seem to me that in the work of Beckett, for example, there is something resentful and pessimistic which postulates some kind of normal expectation which has not been met. Yet precisely what Beckett does in his plays is to deny the possibility of any such normal expectation, and it is therefore to some extent a lack of responsibility on his part to include that expectation in his plays. Ionesco seems to me to be very private, rather sexual, and obscure, and therefore fundamentally rather frivolous. Now Pinter is obviously marvellously talented, and he has an unparalleled ear for observation. He restricts himself very largely to observation, yet he has a strong intuition about the things that people are doing to each other that makes him very disturbing. Is he, however, throwing any light on the condition under discussion ? I simply do not know.

Here I would like to point another danger which arises when you break totally away from a tradition, particularly from a naturalistic or realistic one, and have something that is so totally abstract as action painting or as a Beckett, Ionesco, Simpson or Pinter play. When you say to the artist : " Could you give me some clue as to what you are driving at ?" and he says : " No. I'm not driving at anything ", then you have something so abstract that it is frightfully difficult to tell the authentic from the spurious. Here, I think, our critics have a serious duty to be tough with us, and honest and humble with themselves, because they are on a tight rope. On the one hand they may be throwing out a masterpiece, and on the other they may be selling us something totally worthless. We do need education in this matter.

You will see that I have latent suspicions regarding this school. I do not think it is in the main tradition of our writing and I doubt whether it will be more than rather short-lived. However, when I think of the courage and honesty of Beckett, of the profoundly iconoclastic humour of Ionesco, and of the humility and sensitivity of Pinter in accepting what he sees, and when I consider that this looseness of form cannot but be relevant to the rather confused situation we are in, then I cannot believe that these writers will not in some way be incorporated into the mainstream of our literature.

The Cannon Hill Arts Centre

JOHN ENGLISH

John English, Director of the Midlands Arts Centre for Young People, was interviewed at his home in Birmingham by Michael Anderson.

Q: Why was the Cannon Hill Trust founded, and what does it hope to achieve ?
A: There are two rather presumptuous ideas involved here. First, it is important in a civilised society for the Arts to have a considerable place in people's lives. You cannot prove this, only assert it, but fortunately most people feel it to be true. In fact the Arts do not occupy such a place in our society; if anything, they have a declining place. One might expect the demand for the living arts to have increased in the second or third generation of compulsory education, but this is not so. Take the University population, which I suppose has trebled or quadrupled in the last ten or fifteen years—can you honestly say that support for the theatre, art galleries, orchestras and so on has quadrupled as well ? It has not. It is notorious that even in University cities a live theatre can hardly be supported any longer.

The second presumptuous idea is that you can do anything about this situation, that you can create a better climate for the practice and enjoyment of the Arts. You can of course truly say that this is the task that the Arts Council has been charged with since 1941. You could even go further and say that this should be the job of the educational system, on which we spend so many countless millions, but there again you have to admit it hasn't worked.

The Cannon Hill Trust was founded with the idea that the Arts are important to life, that things are not as they should be, and that one can do something about it. Another very urgent reason is that, particularly in a highly industrialised community, such as the Midlands, we are facing the time when the proper spending of the leisure hours of the day is going to be of greater importance than the proper spending of the working hours. If you look at the way we spend our leisure now, it cannot be said that we are equipping our young people adequately to use their leisure time to the best advantage. So against this picture we say something must be done, and we think we know how to do it.

I suppose we are saying in effect that all other efforts to sustain the cultural institutions start too late. It is no use starting with the adult mind, for it seems to me extremely unlikely that, when a child grows through his adolescent years and is thrust out into the adult world, he will suddenly and automatically develop an interest in more difficult pleasures, such as the theatre or live music, when he has had no opportunity whatsoever to enjoy these things previously, except as a casual interloper into the adult world. We have been much too simple in imagining that the taste for these things comes easily. After

all, the world of the arts is a fairly sophisticated, conventional place. Take the question of music. If you go into a coffee bar and see a crowd of young people draped over a juke-box, it is quite obvious that the music and sounds they are listening to interest and please them, for they have an inbuilt sense of rhythm and melody. This is undoubtedly music, but the satisfactions derived from it are obviously not the same sort as those derived from Mozart or Beethoven; neither does the same sort of equipment serve to enjoy and appreciate them. That is true also of the theatre, which is an art packed with conventional things; to enjoy it properly you have to be aware of these conventions. We must start from the very beginning and introduce the child to the A B C, the vocabulary, the syntax and the prosody of all the arts. The other point—and this I think is one of the points of genius about the Cannon Hill plan—is that it is proposed to introduce that child to the arts as a natural thing, not as a rather special and improving thing. Great care is being taken to associate artistic pleasures with more obvious recreational pleasures.

Q: Many people doubt the possibility of making any cultural impression on the vast majority of people to-day. What do you think about that?

A: I believe it is important to face up to the fact that the Arts are a minority interest and probably always will be, but I think we can hope for a minority of 20 or 30% rather than of 1 or 2% as at present.

Q: You are not afraid that you may have to lower your artistic standards and cheapen them somewhat to get a wider audience?

A: No, because, a priore, we are starting with the assumption that this is not possible. We must provide the very best standard in the very best possible way, otherwise it will not be seen to be good, will not be wanted and will not be appreciated. This minority will not be enlarged by trying to copy the methods or lines of approach of popular commercial entertainment. It can only succeed by retaining its integrity, yet not making itself exclusive.

Q: A lot of cities feel the need for an Arts Centre or something of this kind, but they are frightened by the very heavy financial liability it is likely to involve. In the first place, how are you getting the money to start it, which will obviously be considerable, and secondly, once it has got going, who is going to pay for the running of it?

A: The sum of money involved is not really large. It is true that it is going to cost us in the region of £1½m., but this is not a large sum when you consider, for instance, what one is prepared to spend on a Blue Streak. Here in the Midlands we are proposing to raise the money and spend it in tens years—£150,000 a year. We have many large industrial concerns here, whose average profits each year are in the order of £10m. a piece. It is a very small sum of money if the community really wants to realise this scheme. You could argue that a Centre of this sort should be provided on the rates and on the taxes, but it would have to wait a very long time, and it is for this reason that here in Birmingham we have decided to form an independent Trust. If we wait for the local authority to do it, it will take 20 or 30 years. Therefore we are going to raise the money for it ourselves.

How? By public subscription; from interested individuals; from mums and dads and uncles and aunts, who feel better provision should be made for their children and nephews and nieces; from culturally-alive, socially-conscious organisations like

Rotary, Women's Institutes, Citizens' Societies and all sorts of similar groups, of which there are some 4,000—5,000 in our area; by assistance from Trusts; from industry, board rooms and trade unions. This last is a matter of prime importance. The argument to industry is that conditions are fast being created in which the out of factory hours of employees are becoming of considerable importance to the atmosphere and good relationships between employer and employee. Industry already recognises the need to provide halls of residence at Universities for a few of those who staff their organisations. They also have now to recognise that they should provide for the full use of the leisure time of the children of all their employees.

Q: Have you actually had any response yet?

A: Yes, indeed. We have not launched our public appeal yet because of various pre-requisite conditions which we are still busy organising. (Legal formation of a new charitable Trust, a special Act of Parliament and so on.) We shall not do so until the Autumn, but we have already raised unsolicited the sum of £100,000, which is one-fifth of our first-stage cost. The Trust has no doubt whatsoever that it is going to raise this money.

Q: Once the Centre is established, is it going to pay its own way?

A: We think it important that it should not have to consider money too deeply; we do not want to be starved for money so that we cannot afford to be adventurous. Alongside the capital fund for building purposes, we are building up an endowment fund, the income from which will be sufficient to ensure that the Centre can function freely, so that we can be uncompromising, set up our own standards and say—this is what we have to offer to the community; come and take of it. If in the first year people do not immediately like it, then the plan will not have to be abandoned.

A large part of the income for financing the theatrical performances, the film shows, the puppet shows and the musical performances will be provided by the people who are going to use them. This is an important principle; pleasures are more appreciated when paid for. Our considered opinion is that there is no shortage of money in the community to pay for this pleasure; what is wrong is that the pleasure is not sufficiently apparent.

Q: Obviously, the Children's Theatre is going to play an important part in this Arts Centre. In what way do you think that children's theatre must differ from adult theatre?

A: The whole Centre is to be operated for young people and this covers a tremendous age-range. For practical purposes, you have to split up the age-range into at least three divisions. We propose to provide enjoyment for quite young children, say 6—10, in the mornings; in the afternoons for the 11—14's. By evening, the whole complexion of the Centre will change. It will be devoted to young people, teenagers of 15 onwards, until they get married. The theatre, like all the provisions within the Centre, has to meet the needs of all these groups. It does mean you have to provide different sorts of literature, different sorts of performances, different sorts of style for them. This we propose to to do in the theatre by running more than one company.

Q: Is the theatre itself to have any novel architectural features?

A: Its form includes features which, to many people, would be novel. I envisage that its general usage will be as an open stage, arena-type theatre. This is still a novelty to many people, but it has become

an accepted form of playhouse over the last twelve years. There are some interesting points about the theatre design. First of all, we believe that there is a very strict physical limitation on the size of the auditorium for various sorts of audiences. For young children it is impossible to achieve the degree of participation and concentration necessary with an audience much bigger than 500. There will in fact be two sizes of auditorium—one about 500 and another about 800, for older people. It will be possible to use the theatre as an arena theatre, as a proscenium stage theatre, as a complete theatre-in-the-round, as a circus. This involves all sorts of interesting technical arangements, such as series of sliding stages, falling and rising stages, lighting equipment in triplicate, three sets of dressing rooms, rehearsal rooms and studios.

Q: Brian Way, in an article in *New Theatre Magazine*, suggested that much of the good work done by Children's Theatre companies is not carried on into adult life because of lack of suitable adult theatres to carry on the appreciation for the theatre. Do you see any way out of this problem ?

A: Surely there are less Children's Theatre companies than there are adult companies, so it is not a contraction when it comes to the adult world, but still an expansion, bad as the position is. What I think is important is that most Children's Theatre performances are conducted at such a standard and under such conditions that they are very unlikely to interest the child in the theatre. That is another example of the fundamental re-thinking that is behind the Cannon Hill scheme. Any theatre provided must be at the highest mature professional standards, not the first work of students.

Q: When you have provided enjoyments and created tastes for the various generations of children at the Cannon Hill Centre, what are they going to find when they go into the adult world ?

A: Not enough, certainly. Communities will have to make provision for more theatres, more picture galleries, more concert halls. This is part of the grand design. We are hoping that the need will become apparent, and that when these youngsters become adults they will insist on having these cultural amenities provided in their own communities.

Q: How soon do you hope to get the Centre going ?

A: We shall start building the Arts Club and the first studios this year, and have them open in 1962; the theatre will be started in 1962 and opened in 1964. The next unit is the puppet theatre to provide for the very young children. Then will come the music pavilion, followed by the Visual Arts Gallery and the film theatre. The whole Centre is planned to be completed by 1970.

The Provinces and the National Theatre

CHARLES LANDSTONE

This article by Charles Landstone was originally written before the unhappy announcement by the Chancellor of the Exchequer that there is to be no National Theatre yet. We are publishing it now, in a slightly revised form, because we feel that what Mr. Landstone has to say is still vitally relevant.

It looked as if, after half a century of propaganda, and twelve years after the passing of the National Theatre Act in Parliament, we were on the brink of a decision which might have brought a National Theatre, or at least a National Theatre Company, into existence in this country. Flutterings had been heard from Westminster, from the Waterloo Road, from Stratford-on-Avon, and inspired or semi-inspired paragraphs were appearing almost weekly in *The Times*.

It is worth while briefly going over the history of the movement. The idea of a National Theatre was first seriously mooted when it became the toy of the great Edwardian Merchant Patrons, who saw themselves as the spiritual descendants of the Renaissance Princes. War, which broke out shortly afterwards, began the first stages in the gradual elimination of these Merchant Patrons. In the next thirty years the scheme, though still alive, languished in the doldrums, and it was not until 1942 that the New Patron, the City and the State, became aware of itself as a benefactor of the Arts. Since then there have been several important developments in the progress towards the establishment of a National Theatre.

In 1942 negotiations were started, and subsequently satisfactorily completed, with the London County Council, for the granting of a site on the South Bank. In 1946, thirty years wrangling between the Governors of the Old Vic and the Shakespeare National Theatre Committee came to an end when the two Trusts agreed to set up a Joint Council for the establishment of a National Theatre. By this agreement the National Theatre Committee was to provide the building; the Old Vic the live stock to go into that building.

In 1949 Parliament, in a holiday mood, officially acknowledged the existence of this Joint Council, and voted, without a dissentient voice, that £1,000,000 should be set aside for the building of a National Theatre at such time as funds, labour and materials might be available. The robes of the Renaissance Princes fitted beautifully on the shoulders of the speakers in this debate—Labour, Conservative and Liberal alike.

On a lovely summer's day in July 1951, Her Majesty the Queen Mother laid the Foundation Stone of the National Theatre on the South Bank site. It was an important gathering that assembled for the preliminary function in the Royal Festival Hall. The State, the Church, the Arts, the Bankers, the Politicians were all represented. Somewhere in the background, like the poor relations at the feast, hovered the actors (although of all the participants they were as a body the most faultlessly dressed. It was the days of clothes rationing, and only actors had a comprehensive

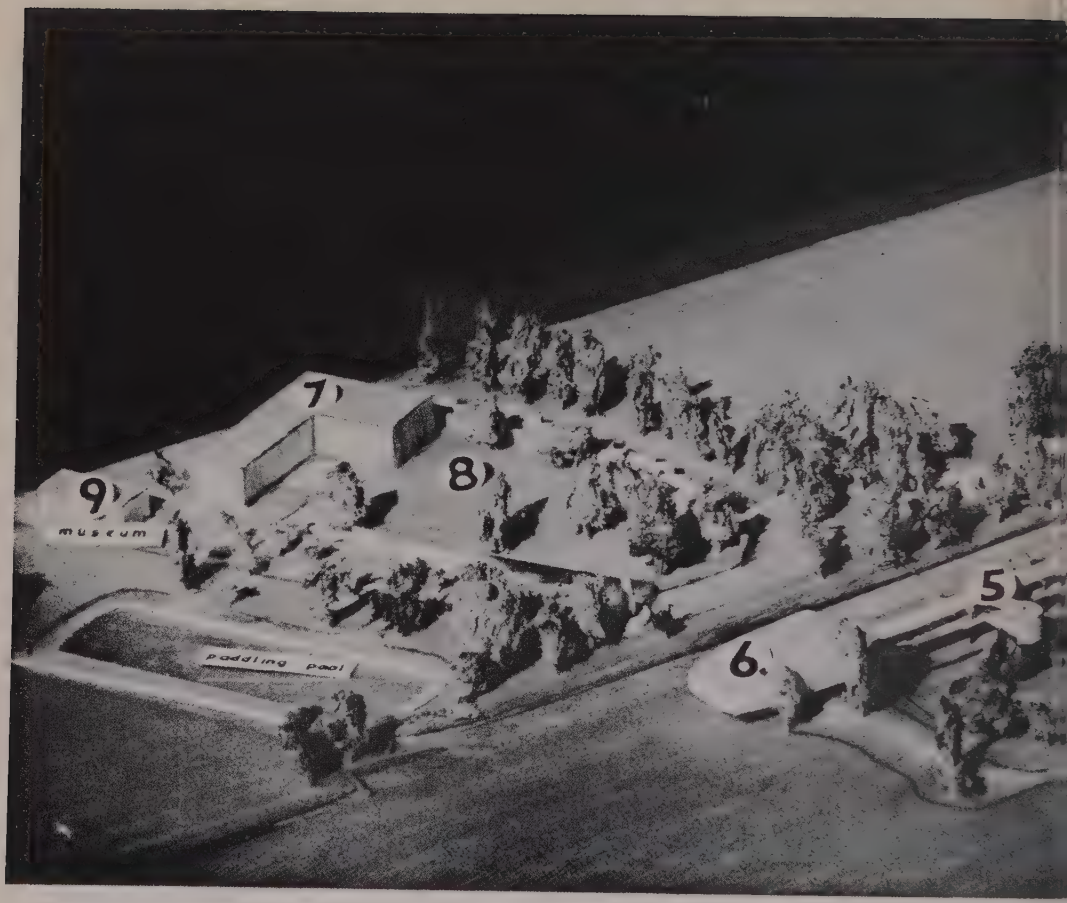
wardrobe). The stone was well and truly laid, and then draped with a black match board covering. A year or two later it was found that the site was the wrong one, and with the permission of the Queen Mother the stone (still in its covering) was moved to a spot a quarter of a mile or so further along the South Bank, and so it rests to-day.

For many years nothing happened, though the National Theatre Committee, under the lead of its indefatigable veteran Chairman, Lord Esher, continued its agitation; but it was obvious that the finances of the country would not stand the strain of this expenditure, although it would only represent a minute fraction of the money thrown away on the abortive Blue Streak. In the meantime there were doubts on the artistic side; the Old Vic had many critics, and the star of Stratford-on-Avon had arisen. After having been for well over a quarter of a century little more than a provincial stock company in Shakespeare's birthplace, the Stratford Company, thanks largely to the spadework put in by Sir Barry Jackson in 1946, emerged as a National Company. Under Anthony Quayle, Glen Byam Shaw, and finally under the dynamic young Peter Hall it had grown to represent all that was best in the English classical theatre, and its omission from the National Theatre scheme became an anachronism. In 1960 this fault was remedied and the Stratford-on-Avon Company joined the Old Vic on the Joint Council of the National Theatre, and a little later a small Executive Committee was established for the purpose of pressing the scheme forward. This Committee was widened to contain representatives of the commercial theatre, in the persons of Prince Littler and Sir Laurence Olivier, but more important was the new Chairman, Sir Kenneth Clark, who presumably would not have undertaken the task unless he felt that it had a fair chance of success.

The political climate had in the meantime undergone considerable change. All three political parties at the 1959 election had, with varying degrees of caution, advocated the establishment of a National Theatre; it was strongly supported by the Arts and Amenities Committees of the Conservative and Labour parties respectively in the House of Commons. (These two Committees work in complete unison, and as such are unique in the House, rather to the amused bewilderment of the other M.P.'s, who have dubbed them 'the Heavenly Twins'). In addition to these factors, the economic condition of the country had undergone a change. No longer could it be said that the economies of the Affluent State could not afford such an insignificant item as the finances of a National Theatre, and even the dimmest witted politician, attuned as his mind was to an atmosphere where slick advertising was the motive force of public affairs, had begun to see that a resplendent National Theatre might be a good talking point in international public relations. Much of the credit for the improved outlook must go to the 'Heavenly Twins', who really *do care* about the theatre, and have done much to foster the cause of the Arts in Parliament. They are ably led by Sir Hamilton Kerr for the Conservatives, and Dr. Barnett Stross for Labour.

Early in December 1960 the new Committee, under Sir Kenneth Clark, saw the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and strongly urged action, so that the National Theatre might be built by 1964, the four hundredth anniversary of Shakespeare's birth. (Incidentally the original Edwardian Committee, set up by Granville Barker and his contemporaries, had hoped to build the

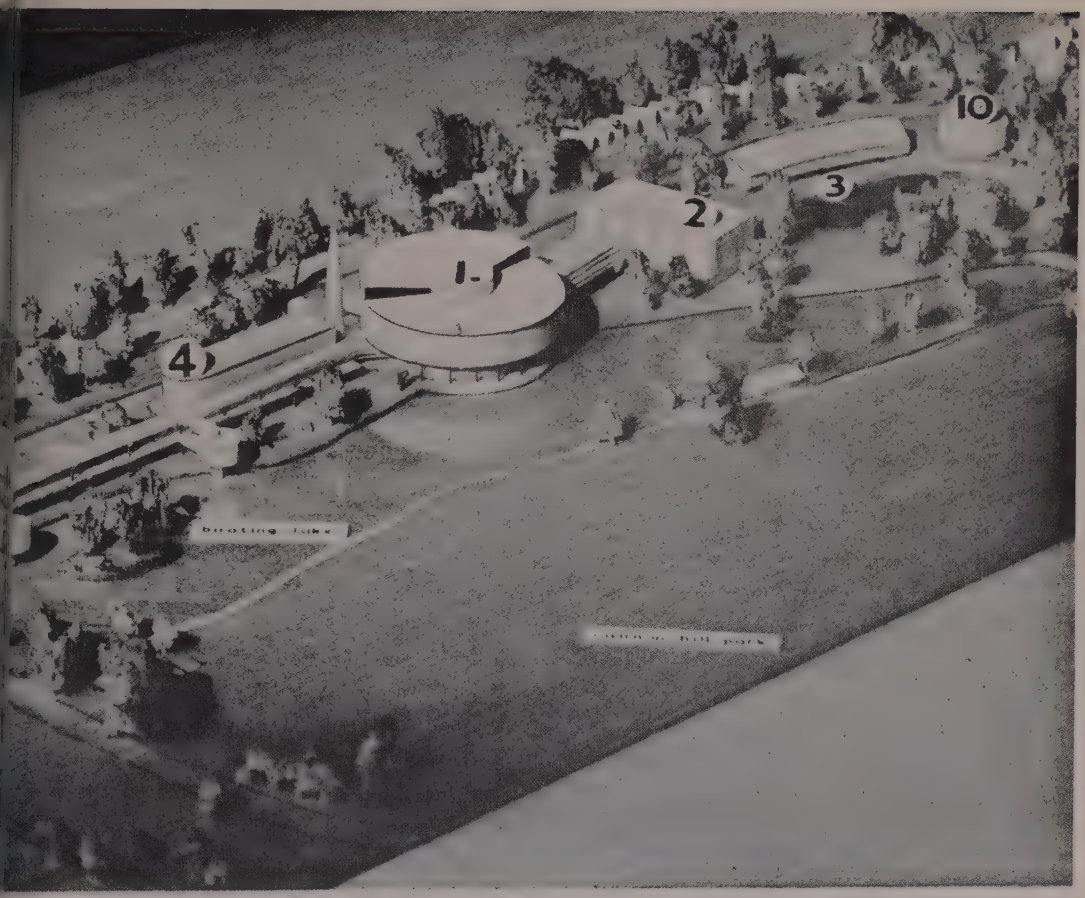
Members of Bristol Drama Department in a recent production of "Murder in the Cathedral," at Parma Student Festival. The Play was directed by Glynne Wickham.



MIDLANDS ARTS

Photograph of Model showing Buildings plann

1. Theatre
2. Indoor Garden Pavilion
3. Swimming Pool
4. Garden Pavilion with refreshment services
5. Tree top walk with aviaries

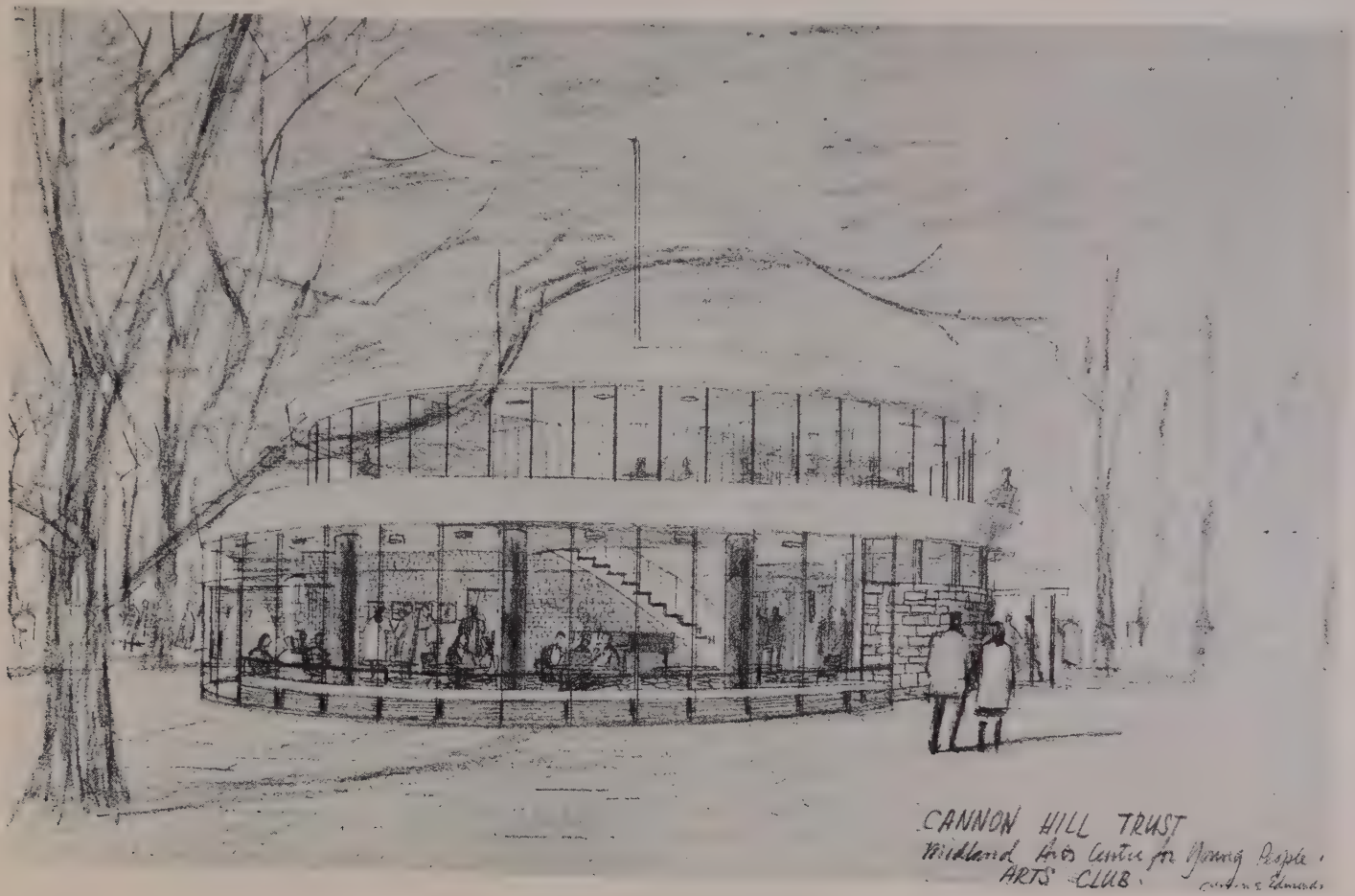


R YOUNG PEOPLE

een acre site in Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham

Theatre and Marionette Theatre
Arts Pavilion
ure Park
ng Natural History Museum
n Hill Arts Club including research and information centre

CANNON HILL TRUST. NOVEMBER. 1960


CANNON HILL TRUST
Midland Arts Centre for Young People
ARTS CLUB

theatre by 1916, the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death—so time moves on). Amongst other factors was pointed out the growing impatience of the London County Council who wished to proceed with their plans for the development of the South Bank, and could not be expected to keep the site open indefinitely. The Chancellor was not unsympathetic, and promised a statement early in the New Year. In the meantime he asked that no public announcements should be made.

Unfortunately, through no fault of Sir Kenneth Clark's Committee, a 'leak' occurred, and a full statement of the proposals appeared a week or two later in the *Sunday Times*. As these have never been officially denied, we may regard them as fairly authentic. It would appear that the plan was to build two theatres on the South Bank, a larger one, and a smaller experimental one, and the cost of these two buildings is estimated at two and a quarter million pounds. In addition it was proposed that a National Theatre Company should be immediately set up, to tour in the provinces and eventually also abroad, so that when the building was completed there should be a Company and an organisation already in being, ready to take it over. It was estimated that such a Company would require an annual subsidy of £350,000 a year.

At that time, in early December, conditions looked rosy, but since then clouds had again risen in the country's economic outlook. There were angry rumblings about a repressive Budget, which would not ensure a friendly reception in the House of Commons for an expenditure which the Philistines might consider unnecessary. On the 27th of February Sir Hamilton Kerr and Dr. Barnett Stross again saw the Financial Secretary and a statement the next day in *The Times* foreshadowed the possibility that the building of the Theatre might be shelved. The fact that this statement proved true is a near disaster. The London County Council will withdraw the site, no other site will be available, and the National Theatre will not come into being for at least another decade, or perhaps even a generation.

Let us however in the meantime examine the possibilities of a National Theatre Company, even if it proves to be a trunk without a head. How will it effect the Repertory Theatre movement, with which I, personally, am so closely connected? This matter was raised at a meeting held at the House of Commons when the executive of the Council of Repertory Theatres (C.O.R.T.) met the two Parliamentary Committees, and we made it clear then that the Repertory Movement regards the establishment of a National Theatre as vital not only to itself, but also to the wellbeing of theatrical art in this country. This position was affirmed at the recent C.O.R.T. conference in Bristol, and reporting on that meeting in the *Stage*, Mr. Robert Digby, the Secretary of C.O.R.T. wrote :— "C.O.R.T. look upon the National Theatre as a pinnacle of their Art, and feel that this pinnacle must have its basis in the Repertory Theatre movement".

A suggestion has been made in influential quarters that a National Theatre Company should link up with what is known as the "grid scheme". The Repertory movement as a whole is strongly opposed to this scheme, which is a plan for fostering a dozen or so major repertory companies, and eliminating the smaller companies by financial pressure caused by the withdrawal of subsidies. We believe in a 'ladder system' by means of which the smaller companies feed the larger companies with artists and directors, and thus create a free movement which will enable

the major companies to be a recruiting ground for the National Theatre Company, as they are at present for the West End Theatre. It is sometimes erroneously supposed that the "grid scheme" is the official policy of the Arts Council, but Sir William Emrys Williams, the originator of the plan, has made it clear *(Daily Telegraph, 24th June, 1959)* that it is not the declared policy of the Arts Council, though he believes it to be a sound and realistic scheme. In other words, like Mr. Gaitskell, he will fight and fight again to have it adopted as official policy; whilst the Repertory Movement will fight and fight again to prevent its implementation.

On the other hand it is evident that the larger repertory companies, themselves drawing their nourishment from the 'ladder system' must be the chief source of supply for talent to a National Theatre Company, and a union more close than the present loose one with the West End would seem to be demanded.

The path for such a union has been shown by Peter Hall, who thanks to the standard reached at Stratford has been able to persuade artists to enter into long term contracts of not less than three years. It is this system which should be extended to embrace the Repertory Movement. It must indeed be a two way system— a system of give and take. The National Theatre would draw a proportion of its younger artists from the Repertory Companies, and these artists, after not less than two years in the Metropolis, would be expected to go back for at least one year to play a leading part in Repertory. At the end of that period the artist should be ready for leads either with the Central Company, or with its competitors in the wider world. Such a system would mean that the artist on leaving Repertory must contract himself for three years — in some cases of undoubted talent this would, no doubt, be a sacrifice. But the advantages of such a plan to both artist and management are apparent. It will maintain a constant circumambulatory flow of talent between the subsidiary and the parent company, which must develop the standard of both actor and company. The temptation to the central management to retain, for the third year, the services of any actor whose quality has proved to be outstanding will be great. It should, however, be resisted, because the presence of this actor in the subsidiary company will immediately raise the standard of his fellow workers, and thus improve the value of the material which is to feed the parent company. At the end of three years the actor, having presumably reached maturity, must be free to return at his will to the National Theatre, or to the commercial world. His choice will, no doubt, be influenced by the progress the National Theatre has made in the interim.

One final word on the question of a School. I, personally, am strongly opposed to the idea that the National Theatre Company should maintain its own school of drama. We have at least three schools of very high standard in London, and we have the Bristol Old Vic School, and the Glasgow Academy. Between them they turn out a high diversity of students, sufficient to supply the market, and, indeed, were it not for the opening provided by Television there would be a glut. If the demand becomes apparent any or all of these schools would obviously devote a greater part of their training to classical art. The post-graduate training of the student takes place in the Repertory Company, and this ensures a diversity of methods and talent which will coalesce in the Centre—and the dullness of uniformity will be kept at bay.

Magic Circle of Children's Theatre

JOSEPH GOLDEN

THE Magic Circle of Children's Theatre—the symbolic representation of the world of enchantment and illusion—is perhaps, of all theatrical experiences, the most difficult to describe and define. We know that at the centre of the Circle is the play. We know that the circumference of the Circle is variable, taking its dimensions from the accumulated experience and insight of the individual child. We know further that the radii of the Circle are nearly limitless in terms of subject, treatment, atmosphere, idiom, humour, and vividness of imagery. We know, too, that like any circle, the Magic Circle of children's theatre must be simple (to be followed and understood), must be total (to be satisfying), and must be infinite (to be memorable and lasting). These things we know about the art—or craft—of theatre for children. It is embarrassingly little.

In a very real sense, this is all we know about any theatrical form—whether for children or adults. Our condition is best described by Igor Stravinsky when he defines music as "speculations in sound and time." An increasing number of American critics, authors, and producers of theatre for children are engaging in just such speculations, drawing up lists of "Objectives", "Standards", "Hints", "Handbooks", "Guides", and "Practices", hoping to evolve a workable dogma that will inspire the writing and producing of good plays in the best Aristotelian tradition of entertainment and instruction.

Clearly, these brief remarks will also speculate, but will be confined to simply a few of the "open questions" about the nature and method of the art practised by children's theatre producers in the United States. The questions, to be sure, are not uniquely American; they do, however, lie close to the hub of the Magic Circle. The questions are: What is the apparent objective of theatre for children as opposed to its essential aesthetic character? What is the stage form best suited to the children's theatre play? How long should a play for children be?

A striking feature of theatre for children, one that has received the greatest attention in the United States, is the concern for the psychological welfare of the child. An incalculable amount of time, effort, and money have been expended on what is commonly known as "the needs of the child". It is impossible to compress the mass of observations, analyses, and clinical studies that compose the current literature of child guidance and psychology.

Children's theatre, furthermore, has laboured successfully to absorb much of the impressive scientific and cultural pedagogy in education that has been evolving in roughly the past fifty years. Not that the pedagogy—life adjustment and individual need—is new; it can be traced back at least as far as Quintilian. Rather, it is an awakening of the potent relationship between the drama and the processes of learning, of adjustment, and of responsible citizenship. Rarely will an annual Children's Theatre Conference go by, for instance, without section meetings and panels conducted by Directors of Child Services, Specialists in Art, Education, and Therapy, officials of Child Welfare Institutes or professors of Psychology. A

Mr. Golden is Assistant Professor of Speech and Drama at Cornell University, U.S.A.

delegate to one such national meeting seemed to represent the general feeling by claiming to prefer to think of children's theatre "not as a compartmentalized separate entity in the educational field but as a closely interwoven part of the total educational fabric".

This is as it should be; and as the only popular form of theatre to make such claims, to insist on studying and responding to the psychological and educational needs of its audience, children's theatre is truly unique. It is, of course, uncertain what ultimate good will be derived from this gazing and nibbling in the pastures of the social sciences. Illuminations, insights, perhaps even revelations will occur certainly. But if the preoccupation with personality and growth assumes the proportions of a cult, as it may easily do in this scientifically orientated era, children's theatre is in danger of obscuring the revelations from its own theatrical garden, the illuminations that have explained and expressed the drama for centuries.

Good drama, in other words, inevitably represents the psychological and intellectual attitudes and convictions of the period in which it is wrought. Entertainment, instruction, therapy, propaganda are not only possible in the drama, they are inescapable. One condition prevails : there must be a clear and consistent point of view expressed by the playwright, an attitude that reflects the playwright's concern for logical, humane, and provocative human behaviour. This point of view, if it is shaped into dramatic form by a children's theatre playwright who is responsible to his society and sensitive to magic, is perhaps all the psychology or sociology required.

A theatre philosophy, however, that is as psyche-centred as Children's Theatre may prove no more durable than did those forms of theatre that were primarily God-, pleasure-, or politics-centred. Despite the reasonable assumption that the welfare of children will be an eternal issue, the theatre cannot retain its own integrity and function if it must regularly and self-consciously haul the extra freight of ulterior purposes. Those who practise theatre for children today are keenly aware of this and will not hesitate to place pure and simple "entertainment" high on the list of objectives. To burden a play with moral or ethical tips, overt admonishments for fair play or subtle suggestions to brush the teeth regularly is reprehensible to most children's theatre playwrights and producers. But while one hand nudges the psyche and the other tickles the fancy, critics and observers have failed to underscore properly what is perhaps the most unique feature in the aesthetic character of children's theatre. Children's theatre is a rare manifestation of an entertainment form that retains the style and intent of a ritualistic theatre.

This notion has a number of immediate ramifications. A theatre of ritual has certain primitive overtones, hinting at something both fundamental and immediate in the perception of and response to experience. A reporter on children's theatre in Sweden, for example, contrasts the intellectualism and sophistication of the adult theatre with child drama in which the "spontaneous magic characteristic of a more primitive theatrical tradition" is so evident. By this he means clearly what Lillian Smith speaks of in her absorbing study of children's literature, *The Unreluctant Years,* when she speaks of children enjoying "a friendly and familiar acquaintance with miracle".

A theatre of ritual is rigidly circumscribed by the conventions demanded by the audience. Indeed, the demands of the

viewers are so strong, so interwoven with their fundamental apprehension of human experience, that the playwright or producer must be wary of any substantial departures from the conventional attitudes and expectations of the spectators. Surely the classic fairly tales and adventure stories are well-loved, not only because they are "familiar", but because they satisfy the demands for predictable fantasy, for magical reality, for tension with security : for ritual.

In a sense, the television Western and detective melodrama have retained a large amount of popularity because they stir up an affection for ritual that many sophisticated adults find hard to resist. In these forms of drama the lines of conflict are clearly drawn, the hero and his ideals are perfectly clear, the moral issues are eminently simple, the end is predictable. The names, environment, and plot may change, but the pattern is firm, it is rigid, it is familiar. We are secure in the comforting clarity and inevitability of the ritual involved.

If adults may be so taken with convention and ritual, certainly the child, representing the primitive stage of intellectual and emotional evolution, is likely to find them more appealing and require them more urgently. Here perhaps is one invariable of the Magic Circle. A play for children must possess the clarity and inevitability in the development of dramatic action that clearly projects and proclaims the reality of illusion, the reasonableness of fantasy, and the practicality of magic.

What of form in the Children's Theatre ? Without question, theatre-in-the-round is the form of staging that realizes most completely the aesthetic and educational goals of children's theatre. This is less of an abrupt declaration than it seems to be. Many of the features we have come to associate with arena theatre—its intimacy, its intensification of reality, the communal spirit it excites in the audience—are features that inspire a satisfying response from a child audience. What better conditions exist for encouraging audience identification with the hero's struggles, for enhancing the ritual, than when the audience completely surrounds the hero and is no more than five rows away from him ? How can stronger empathy be obtained than when a child can reach out and almost touch the hero or nearly be a third party in the hatching of a scheme against him ? He is present on the very field of battle, in the very room of the action, rather than separated from it by an artificial "fourth wall".

The arena theatre has limitations, to be sure; all of them, however, can work to the advantage of producer and audience. That conventional scenery is out of the question on the arena is no great loss; the director or designer will be forced to create set pieces that will be abstract, expressive, and colourful, allowing the children to imaginatively fill in the scenic gaps. That there is no "distance" between player and viewer is unimportant; in an audience of children, there is a close correlation between distance from stage and weakening attention and the arena, by its nature, draws everyone in close. In short, theatre-in-the-round is the most nearly perfect manifestation of the Magic Circle. The perfect manifestation is within the child.

The question of the length of performance of a play for children ought to be a subject of hot controversy. Sadly, it is not. Play publishers apparently have convinced producers and producers have convinced parents that a play for children is really to be structured like a play for

adults, only in miniature. Play after play is organized in the cumbersome three act division as if there were an urgent desire to prove that they were really plays worthy of serious attention by ticket-buyers.

Actually, the total number of acts and scenes is peripheral; a good play for children transcends the arbitrary arrangement of its action. What is central, however, is the time consumed to play the play. Quite flatly, fifty to sixty minutes ought to be the maximum playing time for a play for children up to about the age of twelve. Publishers and a number of producers will contest this time figure on the grounds that a longer work (one and a half to one and three-quarters hours) with standard divisions is essential to training future audiences, that periods for "stretching" need to be incorporated into the script, and that character needs more time to develop. These are worthy arguments; they are also essentially unrealistic.

The specifications for the children's play — devised and disseminated by sponsors of playwriting contests and by publishers—have very little basis in fact, either psychological or theatrical. Furthermore, the ninety to one hundred and five minutes of playing time that most producing groups seem to prefer far surpasses the time needed to expose, develop, complicate, and resolve a dramatic theme. A satisfying 40-minute one-act play for adults, for example, can amply deal with the single major crisis common to the short play and still have plenty of room to spare. To double the length of performance in the writing of a play for children seems to suggest a gross lack of economy and compression of writing style and an inevitable thinning out of dramatic impact.

Without exception, every "Three" or "Four" act children's play now in print can survive the pruning out of fifteen to twenty minutes' worth of dialogue and action without injuring the style or intent of the author. Invariably, the plays are better for such pruning; images are sharper, theme is more vivid, and the all-important dramatic flow is not impeded. If we are to do any training of future audiences, we must first be sure that present audiences are made conscious of primary dramatic values. These will have nothing to do with the number of acts or the number of minutes of playing time. If we are training a child audience for anything (and "training" may be too audacious a word) it is to let them experience, and ultimately recognize, the extreme delight possible in the rigorously disciplined technique of the theatre : selection, compression, and unbroken dramatic line.

This brings us to the second problem of the long play, the need for intermission or "stretch" periods so strongly advocated. It is better to abandon these periods completely and simply reduce the playing by the twenty or twenty-five minutes saved. If the child is witnessing an exciting, well constructed and colourful play, it is as wrong to interfere with his apprehension of the vivid forward motion of the drama as it is to intrude upon a dream, a game, or a personal fancy.

The third reason often heard for the long play is the need to develop character fully. Under normal circumstances, the reason is perfectly valid. But writing for children is not a normal circumstance. "Character" in a children's play is not properly character as we have come to understand the term in other forms of drama. It is something else : namely, an abstraction of reality that is endowed with enough human traits to personify, and satisfy, an urgent desire in the child spectator. Since the child himself is far from being a fully developed

character, the reality that is abstracted is necessarily narrow. Thus, the chief aim of character in a play for children is not dimension; it is action. It is not how a character develops that is important; it is what he does. And the less time it takes him to get about his business of doing, the better.

Withal, we have travelled only a small segment of the Magic Circle in these brief observations. But they will, I hope, suggest the nature of the inquiries into the elusive and unpredictable art of Children's Theatre.

Book Reviews

Some recent publications reviewed by
MARTIN SHUTTLEWORTH

Martin Shuttleworth is the current holder of the Fellowship in Playwriting at the Department of Drama, Bristol University. A former Literary Editor of "Time and Tide," he has just had his latest play, "Goatsong," presented at the Theatre Royal, Bristol, by the Bristol Old Vic Company.

Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage, translated with an introductory essay by David Magarshak (Faber, 30s.)

The Connexion, by Jack Gelber (Faber, 10/6.)

A Taste of Honey, by Shelagh Delaney (Methuen, 4/6.)

Lion in Love, by Shelagh Delaney (Methuen 4/6.)

The Oxford Ibsen Vol. 5, (Oxford University Press, 30s.)

The Entertainer, by John Osborne (Faber, 10/6.)

Stanislavsky was a mystic, a Russian and an intellectual. Most actors are none of these things . . . hence the majority of their difficulties with him. He asks too much and much of what he asks is alien, at any rate to British actors and British audiences . . . but I must be careful, for I am already using the word 'British' in a perjorative sense. My instincts make me feel that in this connection it ought to be. Yet such empirical knowledge of the theatre as I have, and the amount of anti-Stanislavsky criticism I have read and heard from the lips of actors, makes me cautious, aware that there is a synthesis of Stanislavsky and anti-Stanislavsky that is more than either.

Stanislavsky was a very, very great man, but the qualities which gave him his greatness are not universal qualities and the actor's art is universal. His tone is a little too elevated for the Green Room,

except in those perennial but brief periods when evangelism in the form of commitment, engagement or what-have-you sweep through it. If you're like me you'll believe that the theatre should be always engaged; you'll feel, however hard you try to repress it, a sense of outrage at the casualness and bonhomie and chummery with which actors put the play in its place, making it an essential but not all-devouring element of the theatrical twenty four hours. You'll feel this and you'll be both right and wrong; right because the greatest art cannot be approached in the theatre except under exceptional conditions, wrong because those conditions cannot be forced. No one was more aware of this than Stanislavsky, but his receipt, despite all his reservations, does in the end amount to an attempt to make plum pudding out of porridge.

It's perhaps rather naughty, but let's consider for a moment at this point this quotation from the sixteenth century German mystic, Jacob Boehme :

Master : If thou rulest over all creatures but outwardly, there cannot be much in that. But if thou hast a mind to possess all Things and to be a Lord indeed over all Things in this World, there is quite another Method to be taken by thee.

Disciple : Pray, how is that ? And what Method must I take, whereby to arrive at this Sovereignity ?

Master: Thou must learn to distinguish well betwixt the Thing and that which only is an image thereof . . .

The verbal coincidence is, of course, what catches the eye, but " Thou must learn to distinguish betwixt the Thing and that which only is an image thereof " is the perpetual cry of all mystics, and of Stanislavsky.

He's in a more than Cartesian mess. Like an angry Russian mujik with a broken vacuum flask, he shakes and worries at the subtleties and impenetrabilities of the various ontological arguments, as if he hoped to get out of them simultaneously both an implosion and an explosion and yet still have an intact vacuum flask to keep his vodka hot.

Mystics get away with this, of course, but few mystics try to operate in the theatre and those that have done, such as Calderon or Claudel, tend to be playwrights and monotheists, whereas Stanislavsky was a producer and a pagan. (A case might easily be made out for him as one of the most considerable pagan mystics since Epicurus—the link emerges, tenuously, if one compares for a moment Diaghilev with Pico della Mirandola. But that's by-the-by). The point is that actors, with their empirical sense, sniff the catch. " To play Pistol I've got to be Pistol " sounds fine, but, ultimately, it's great nonsense, except in the sense that St. John of the Cross's lines :

"Oh night that joined the lover
to the beloved bride
transfiguring them each into the other"

are not great nonsense.

In between " being Pistol " and " pretending to be Pistol " there are many states of mind, some of which approach closer to " being Pistol " than others, but none of which get there. They can't. Pistol is not Joe Snooks, even if Joe Snooks is playing him so superbly that the one is transfigured into the other. This is where Stanislavsky's mysticism get in the way at the same time that it helps. He was always hoping to keep this point not quite cleared-up, to by-pass it in the same way that St. John of the Cross does in the above lines, by assertion.

Now this assertion, as I hope I have made abundantly clear, is, at its roots, an intellectual and mystical assertion. It is,

perhaps, the basic mystical and intellectual assertion of all theatre, but in Stanislavsky's case it has a particular tone, a Russian tone, an intense tone, and even an arrogant tone. It is this that leaves it less than universal, even if one passes over the central ontological flaw. It is very unfair to say that he wanted everybody to act like Stanislavsky, but the progression that he makes out from ham, through imitative to recreative acting, leaves out an enormous amount. It leaves out, for instance, Edmund Kean. (You remember Hazlitt's story about rushing round to Kean's dressing room after *Othello* to tell him that he had never been so moved in his life, only to be told by Kean that at the highest point in the jealousy scene the gesture he had made had not come out of the play at all, but out of a tickle at the end of his nose). I know you can match this by many stories of Stanislavsky's own, such as the one about the time he played Pepel with his mind on other things—but about Stanislavsky there is always an urgency, an intensity that is entirely lacking in many Anglo-Saxon actors of the highest class; men who are certainly not hams or imitative actors in his sense of the terms, but who have got through to the 'recreative' class by methods very different to his, or to those of those great Russian actors from watching whom he conned his system.

Stanislavsky's system is, then, rebarbative to the spirit of much Anglo-Saxon acting because that acting finds nothing for itself in a road that leads to the heights by self analysis, a self analysis that it subconsciously rejects because it feels it goes against the spirit of the Green Room, out of whose snug and bonhomie great acting can just as easily emerge by less intense techniques.

This is a Green Room view and 'less intense' should probably just simply be 'different'. The sense, and the just sense, is that, if you do your Stanislavsky before playing Sir Toby Belch, you've got Malvolio somehow looking over your shoulder.

" The first stanza came out just like that, the second with a little coaxing after tea ". So Housman on one of the Shropshire Lad poems. It will be the tone of the native Stanislavsky when he appears. Meanwhile the burning eyes of the Slav gentleman look out from the second edition of Mr. Magarshak's invaluable *Stanislavsky on the Art of the Stage*. Veiled they are, those eyes, worldly with the worldliness of one who has taken the world to pieces and put it together again in the expectation that though two and two would still make four it would seem like five. And, by heavens, he could make it seem so, too, the wonderful old magician of Moscow.

The Connexion is a play which tries to go through the looking class and become the reality, not the mirror. When I saw it, and now again as I read it, I feel that this is the least successful thing about it. All that clumsy lumbering business of chaps—chaps they were in London, not squares—coming up from the audience; bringing cameras on, all the whole infinitely slow foddlederol; thought moving at the speed of flesh instead of at the speed of the receiving mind.

Tynan in his preface to the play and Brooke in an article clutch greedily—here is originality, here is the break-out. Just so Marie Antoinette pretended to herself that she had a real live farm down there at the Trianon. Court life makes for silliness, and too much theatre, I'm afraid, can make men as naïve as too little, for not through fiddling the boundaries of form do you make a play something more than a play, do you make those actors pretending to be

junkies real junkies (even if they are), do you make those squares in the audience get the sensations of being junked (or whatever the passive verb should be). You do it by writing a very good play.

This Mr. Gelber has done—a real live horse of a play nailed down through the shoes to a Model T chassis. Consider this : *Leech* : Who threw the match on the floor ?

> What do you think I'm running here ? A hotel for slobs ? I feed you and even give you my clothes. And what do you do ? Look at this place ! Look at it ! . . .

This is a playwright of a demonstrably high order doing his properly defined Aristotelian job of imitating and illuminating reality. Now consider this :

Jim : Huh ! Good people, do not be intimidated by any of these boys during the interval. No matter what they tell you they will be turned on a scientifically accurate amount of heroin in the next act. And that is their payment for the performance, excluding any money made on the film . . .

This is pathetic. It at once introduces the adult-child relationship between audience and playwright. O.K. son, if that's the way you want it, you really are Wyatt Earp.

Shelagh Delaney involves herself so far in no such formal problems. She has not been exposed to a university education and there are less layers of self-consciousness—not of consciousness. (Give her evens and back her to lose by a head to Virginia Woolf in the Sensitivity Stakes).

Both *Lion In Love* and *A Taste of Honey* are straightforward contained plays that thrust through the proscenium arch but do not try to pretend it isn't there.

A Taste of Honey is the better because it is the most felt, the most concentrated. Because of everything that everybody else has said and to which it is needless to add at this late date, I will simply rehearse again lovingly the bare synopsis of a play that I personally keep on the shelves next to *Wuthering Heights.*

Two women. The mother a loud-mouthed, ageing blonde, fond of gin, men and herself. Her daughter an adolescent brought up in squalor, neglected all her life. The mother finds a one-eyed (?) riley and goes off to marry (?) him, leaving the daughter in their slum attic. The young girl gets involved with an African sailor, who sails away leaving her pregnant. She is then befriended by a homosexual boy who looks after her and her unborn baby when no one else seems to care. It is a pathetic and moving relationship. The boy tries to make her want her baby and learn to look after it. He makes clothes for it, buys a cot, cooks for her. Then the yellow goddess returns (very interesting to see what Graves will have to say about her), throws the boy out and settles in herself . . .

Justify that comparision to *Wuthering Heights ?* Not at this point, but both are virgin plays. That one was and one wasn't is not important : they both strum the maidenhead in time with the heavenly spheres.

Next in this lovely huggle-tuggle of books we have the Master—*The Pillars, Ghosts,* and *The Doll's House* in one great fat and excellently introduced volume of McFarlane's *Oxford Ibsen.* The clock has ticked some sixty or eighty or whatever number of years it is on, but we have got no further, done no better. In Ibsen is the experience and sensibility not only of the nineteenth but also the first half of the twentieth century. I adore those parsons who disagree and are constantly trumpetting how old-fashioned he is, but, Christianity aside, every response that has been made to the twentieth century, and every tight-rope between those responses, is foreshadowed somewhere or other in the plays.

What is more, no one has come up since then with a dramatic technique that outstrips or is not derived in some way from his left Gyntian or his right prose hand. This is a generalisation and profession of faith that I could, if called upon, defend in detail.

The Entertainer, which is the last book to be reviewed in this list, presents one of the few, the very few, exceptions. Here, perhaps, is a real break-through in form. As a play it does have its sags and there is a Trinculo-ish side to Osborne, a touch of the bully, which diminishes his work at the same time as it gives it its unique force. The really important thing about *The Entertainer* is that here theatre is coming out of theatre. Shakespeare's theatre and his deep understanding, his all-comprehension of the world, come much more, I think, than people outside theatre seem to realize, from his complete immersion and his understanding of the lives of the companies with which he worked. There is a pressure in the theatre, a pressing down on the nerves in rehearsal, performance and between that is far more intense than anything known to the scholars who interpret him. Only those, I come increasingly to believe, who know what those pressures are and can express them can really write for the theatre. Osborne, in this sense (and even though he proclaims it over-much himself), is our only really professional playwright. Archie Rice is a player king; the play of which he is protagonist uses the world of the theatre, as Shakespeare used it, as no one else has had the inbred knowledge to use it, as master image for the world.

This total theatrical image is as broad and as complex as all the humanity of all the players, con-men, scene-shifters, tea-makers, dolls, hangers-on, designers, seamstresses, props, boards, scenery, canvas, lights—and what is more, it is all rammed home together and explodes through the proscenium arch when a Shakespeare knows how to light the match—or an Osborne, very nearly.

Which brings us back to Stanislavsky. Somewhere in this book under review he says, very coldly, that your really great actor will always arrive two or three hours before performance and, in the silence of the chapel perilous of his dressing room, lay up his arms and prepare himself for the spiritual heights of his performance. I can't see Archie Rice doing that. Archie will get through—and he will get through too—by the age old British method of flap, muddle, panic, and a double Scotch. Shakespeare was Stanislavsky and more and Archie and more; so must theatre be. Perhaps in these next few years it is going to be again. Things look better, anyway, than they have done for some three hundred and fifty years.

Choosing A Play, by Roy Stacey. (Herbert Jenkins, 95 pages, 6/-.)

The 'Practical Stage Handbooks' series has now an extensive list of nineteen titles, but I find it significant that only one of these—that devoted to the organisation of a theatrical society—contains the word 'amateur', in spite of the fact that this series is directed at the amateur stage. In common with Mr. Roy Stacey, author of *Choosing A Play*, the latest addition to the series, I dislike those books which purport to teach 'amateur' acting, production and so on, for this implies a distinction between the amateur and professional stages other than that of hobby and livelihood. The essentials of the theatre do not, indeed cannot, differ in nature between the two. It is for this reason that space has been given here to a book which would normally

be outside the scope of this magazine.

Mr. Stacey attempts to give some guidance and help to amateur societies in the old problem of selecting a play for presentation. Very sensibly, he gives no hard and fast rules, and is in no way dogmatic in his statements, saying this type of society must present this type of play. Instead, he approaches the question from the aspect of the play itself, by differentiating carefully, if somewhat superficially, between types of plays, by discussing the fundamentals of a good play, and by explaining various methods of selection and casting. In no wise does he presume to reach any definite conclusions on the problem—the final criteria must be experience and expediency.

Although the amateur stage will not find here what it is really looking for—a cut and dried method of play selection (in other words, the impossible)—it will find a useful guide to the problem, and even a useful introduction to the nature of the drama itself. What is more important, it will find a very explicit and timely reminder of its own nature, function and purpose, a reminder that the true meaning of the word 'amateur' is not synonymous with 'poor'.

B.J.S.

A Subject of Scandal and Concern, by John Osborne (Faber, 5-/.)

A Subject of Scandal and Concern was written specifically for television and was first performed in November, 1960. It purports to be a documentary account of the trial and imprisonment of George Jacob Holyoake, the last person in this country to be thus punished for blasphemy, only a little over a century ago.

Yet the play is only incidentally an attack on religious and judicial bigotry, and the sober documentary form of the piece is a blind for some sharp invective from the character of the Narrator. He assures the viewers, at the beginning, that they are about to see an 'entertainment', and that they may go on with what they were doing before it started, while he fills in 'with incidental but necessary information . . . a straightforward account of an obscure event' in England's history. He is as offhand, ingratiating and superior as one of the television chairmen to whom he likens himself, so the audience presumably settles back, reassured, waiting to be entertained. 'You will not really be troubled with anything unfamiliar'.

The documentary itself is well constructed. We are introduced to Holyoake in Act 1: proud, stubborn, rather weak, and with an impediment in his speech which, says Osborne, is to be exploited sparingly—no easy playing for sympathy.

We then see the meeting at which the offence is committed, where Holyoake, ironically, is trapped into uttering some compromising words in reply to an irrelevantly pious question from the floor, after he has delivered a speech on social reform. A twisted account of the affair appears in the Press, leaving out all discussion of his lecture and concentrating on the alleged blasphemy. An editorial footnote appeals to the authorities 'to prevent any further publicity' of 'such diabolical sentiments'. There is a wry comment from the Narrator on the unchanging standards of morality of newspapers—a typical Osborne aside.

Holyoake is arrested, and in Act II, mistrusting lawyers, he defends himself at his trial. In a finely written and rational speech he pleads for freedom of opinion, and reminds his hearers of how judgement once frowned on 'men choked with their beef steak on a Friday', but that now public opinion has 'calculated the risk'

that such behaviour 'can no longer be a blasphemy'. Only public and judicial opinion can determine what constitutes an offence, in the absence of an absolute Truth, and such judgments must be capricious. 'Blasphemy, as such, is an impossibility', and even from an orthodox Christian point of view can be considered no more than an 'annoyance to God', whose perfection must be unshakable. The judge's summing-up is quite fair, but the jury finds Holyoake guilty and he is sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

Act III shows his sufferings in prison, where he remains an unbeliever, in the face of repeated attempts to convert him, and in spite, perhaps, of himself. While he is imprisoned, his daughter dies, and Osborne raises the question of how far idealism should be uncompromising. Holyoake denies his wife the kind of freedom he himself demands, and forces her to arrange a funeral 'without parade, without priest or priestly ceremony', instead of the Christian burial she desires for her child. Like many idealists, he has felt compelled to impose his beliefs upon others; it is left to the audience to decide whether he is right in this case—to his wife, it is unforgivable.

The play ends with Holyoake's departure from prison, and the Narrator appears to deliver the *coup de grace*, speaking directly to the audience, which is Osborne's true target.

'For those who seek information, it has been put before you. If it is meaning you are looking for, then you must start collecting for yourself'. By using a documentary approach, by refraining from comment on the action of his characters, and by refusing to provide the 'Christmas cracker motto' which he says the telemasses demand, Osborne forces the viewer to decide for himself the problems posed by the play. Mere 'entertainment' leaves nothing to the intelligence of the audience, and so is useless and unsatisfying; here, the author tricks us into expecting an hour's amusement of this kind, then frustrates, and finally attacks us with disarming arrogance.

The Narrator says contemptuously: 'If you are waiting for the commercial, it is probably this: you cannot live by bread alone. You must have jam—even if it is mixed with another man's blood'. This statement lacks the clarity of the average commercial, and one might predict that Osborne's product, stimulating and neatly packaged though it is, will not sell to a very large body of consumers. You cannot expect the captive audience to enjoy being caught out in this way. Nor will people feel flattered—and here, after the theme of martyrdom, and the enigmatic flavour of the commercial, a Christian connotation is inevitable—at being compared with the kind of *panem et circenses* mob which sits around, uncritical and uninvolved, to watch the 'entertainment' of a crucifixion.

Auret Pritchard

"Schriften über Theater": by Heinrich Laube. Henschel Verlag, Berlin. 1959. 806 pages. Illustrated.

This careful and comprehensive selection is comprised of the many writings of one of the most important figures in the German and Austrian theatre of the nineteenth century. Heinrich Laube began his theatrical career as a drama critic, and in 1849 he became the director of the 'Burgtheater' in Vienna. His writings are, therefore, of value both as a record of contemporaneous theatre activity, and also as a study of the difficulties of practical theatrical production.

The book contains his own experiences

as a director in the theatre, which he describes in *Das Burgtheater*, *Das Norddeutsche Theater* and *Das Wiener Stadttheater*. The second half of the volume contains a selection of his critical essays which were originally published in the form of reviews in several newspapers and journals.

We learn of the successes and failures in the theatre, of the clashes with the censor and the press, of the difficulties experienced in forming a regular company and of choosing material for the repertory, and, finally, of the advantages and the strain of working with contemporary dramatists. Here, too, there is a record of the art of the actor, and an assessment of the achievements of such well known figures as Carl Seydelmann, Josef Wagner and Marie Seebach.

The collection contains, however, much more than purely factual reports. Heinrich Laube was deeply concerned with the importance of the theatre as a social organ. As Lessing before him, he is concerned with the necessity of forming a national theatre, and argues that no such theatre can grow out of the closely controlled court playhouses, which ignored entirely the existence of a middle-class theatre-going public. This leads him on to a consideration of the importance of the audience. "Das Publikum wird nicht nur erzogen, sondern erzieht auch." The theatre is of value to all classes of society, not only to the upper strata; hence Berlin and Vienna would be suitable centres of dramatic activity since it was only there that the wide audiences he envisaged were available.

Both Laube's reports of the years of his directorship, and his purely critical writings captivate the reader on account of his easy and compelling style. The interest is consistently sustained through his love of, and enthusiasm for the art of the theatre and all that contributed to achieve this art. Always one is aware of his reticence in censure, and his joy when he may praise a successful production or an actor who has achieved a notable performance.

Laube was one of the pioneers of the modern German stage, and prepared the way for the establishment of a theatre such as the 'Burgtheater', which today has won wide acclaim. Thus, with the obvious value of the text and its excellent illustrations, this publication certainly deserves attention and early translation into English.

Birgit Rommel

Also received, too late for review in this issue :

King Henry IV Part 1 (Players' Shakespeare Series, Heinmann, 5/6.)

The Plays of Courteline (Heinmann, 8/6.)

Sam The Highest Jumper of Them All, by William Saroyan (Faber, 13/6.)

Guildford's New Playhouse

A NEW £200,000 theatre to be built on the banks of the River Wey at Guildford is to be called the Yvonne Arnaud Theatre, after the actress, who was a founder-director of the present Guildford Theatre Club. The borough council has allocated an attractive site near the river, and plans have been drawn for a horseshoe-shaped building with a round auditorium and an adaptable stage. It will seat 575 on two levels. It is designed to combine comfort and elegance with technical efficiency, and it is hoped to make it a centre of research and experiment in the arts of the theatre and their application to newer forms of entertainment, such as television.

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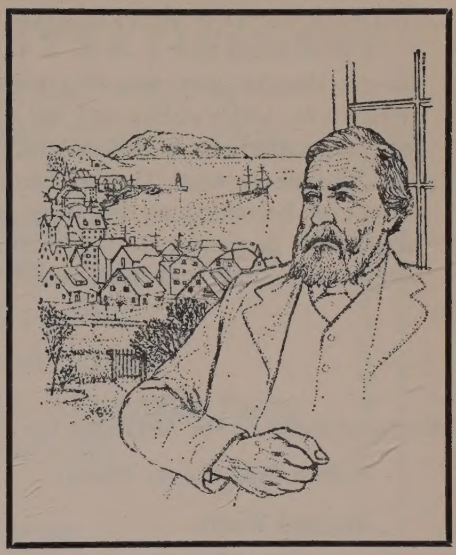

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The architects of the new theatre are Messrs Scott, Brownrigg and Turner of Guildford, whose plans will form the basis of a special article on this scheme in the October issue of *New Theatre Magazine.*

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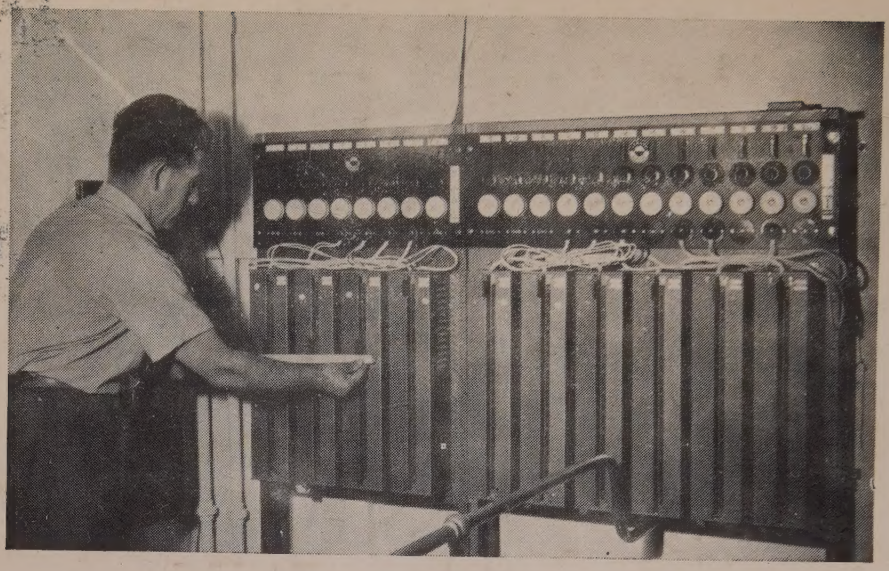

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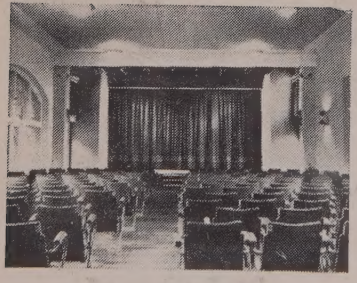

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